

Pop Talk: Wentz's lyrics push Fall Out Boy to rare heights

by Nina Garin

Here's something you won't believe: Pete Wentz does not cry.

The Fall Out Boy bassist may write emotional lyrics about all sorts of heartbreaky things, but you will not see a tear anywhere near his black-linered eyes.

FALL OUT BOY - You may not know it by his music, but Fall Out Boy bassist Pete Wentz loves Motown, Michael Jackson and World Cup soccer. CNS Photo by Sean M. Haffey. "I can't remember the last time I cried. I know it's been a really long time since I cried over a relationship," Wentz said. "I'm not really good at showing emotions. I go through life in a kind of robotic way. I don't show excitement about much, either."

Gasp!

How can this be?

The same guy who wrote: You're just the girl all the boys want to dance with / And I'm just the boy who's had too many chances ("A Little Less Sixteen Candles a Little More Touch Me") is emotionally barren?

Wentz and his band members - Patrick Stump, Andrew Hurley and Joseph Trohman - have made a pretty decent living by being overly open with their feelings.

Fall Out Boy's punky rock might have a tough exterior, but deep down these guys are hurting. They say awkwardly romantic things, things guys in rock bands don't usually say.

Like: You'll put your eyes to the sun and say, 'I know you're only blinding to keep back what the clouds are hiding.'

See? Awk.

So is it possible for the author of that line from "The Carpal Tunnel of Love" not to have feelings? Well, not exactly. Wentz says he's just really, really bottled up.

"I think writing lyrics allows me to emote in a way I otherwise wouldn't," he said. "If I didn't have that outlet, I would explode. I'm a very poor conversationalist, but I feel completely comfortable talking in front of a microphone."

Anyone who has ever gone to a Fall Out Boy concert knows all about Wentz's love of the spotlight. Even though he's Fall Out Boy's most popular band member, he isn't even the frontman. He's the bassist.

But Wentz commands a stage like he's a highly-trained show dog - posing just right for his legion of lady fans, then doing extreme jumps and twirls to please the rocker crowd.

This love of attention doesn't seem to be limited to live shows, either.

Wentz constantly makes gossip headlines for his pervy online behavior (posted Internet pictures of his nether-regions), his love life (girlfriend is Ashlee Simpson) and his mysterious breakdowns.

Fall Out Boy recently had to postpone a bunch of concert dates because Wentz had "personal issues."

Those issues weren't revealed, but the bassist has always been open about his battles with depression.

In 2005, Wentz took an overdose of anxiety pills and moved back home with his parents. He even wrote a book, "The Boy With the Thorn in His Side," based on his childhood nightmares.

Still, he insists that just because he's so open in his writing, people - even his most devoted fans - don't really know him.

"The beauty of being the person behind the pen is that you get to rewrite history," he said. "But people who read my lyrics think they have me all figured out. I haven't even figured myself out yet so it blows my mind that other people think they have."

It's not easy to figure out a guy like Wentz.

Along with being in a rock group that somehow churns out very catchy songs year after year, he's also a savvy businessman.

Wentz runs Decaydance Records, which represents other popular bands like Panic! At the Disco, The Academy Is ... and Gym Class Heroes.

He has a company, Clandestine Industries, that sells lifestyle gear to emo kids. The Web site (www.bandmerch.com) sells hoodies, jewelry, handbags, T-shirts, scarves, posters and even socks with hearts and/or bats.

It doesn't stop there. Wentz has a film production company and he designed a black and red signature bass guitar. Recently, he and some fellow emo rocker friends opened Angels & Kings, a nightclub in New York.

"I don't consider myself a businessman," he said. "It's just that the music business is like the Wild West. No one knows what's going to happen. So it's just good to have all kinds of options out there."

But perhaps the strangest thing of this whole Fall Out Boy phenomena is that Wentz wasn't even thinking about being a world famous rocker when he was growing up in the suburbs of Chicago.

He wasn't all that great at music or at school. But the one thing he could do really well was play soccer.

"Soccer presented no challenge to me. Playing felt like breathing, I always had a magical connection to the ball," he said. "But it didn't feel like an adventure. Music was more of a challenge and, in the end, felt more interesting."

After deciding to devote himself to music, Wentz hooked up with other Illinois rockers and created Fall Out Boy in 2001. Though the band didn't reach commercial success until 2005, it had a huge underground following that spread through word of mouth and the internet.

And now, with the release of its latest album, "Infinity on High," the band is clearly going to be around for a while. The album debuted at No.1 and its singles continue to top the pop charts.

The group is even branching out further by collaborating with Kanye West and Timbaland.

Still, no matter how successful Wentz's projects are, he'll always be that insecure kid who doubts himself at all times.

"I actually think a lot of my words aren't eloquent," he said. "They're even kind of misogynistic, emotionally stunted. But Patrick's voice makes up for those things. That guy can sing the phone book and people would listen to it."

The Lineup

Fall Out Boy is on the Honda Civic Tour with a handful of other bands. Here's the rest of the lineup:

(44): We shouldn't have to tell you that this is Mark Hoppus and Travis Barker's new band. You know, from blink-182? And Pete Wentz loves blink-182. "I really look up to blink-182. I'm impressed with their longevity and I think the way they've been able to reinvent themselves is genius."

The Academy Is ... : Like Fall Out Boy, this emo band also comes from the suburbs of Chicago. And its album is on Wentz's label. Oh, and members of this band opened a New York nightclub with Wentz. So they're pretty much BFFs.

Paul Wall: What's this? A rapper at an emo show?? What's going on? Perhaps Clandestine Industries sees a future in selling grills with bats and hearts? Anyway, this Houston rapper should bring some much-needed diversity.

Cobra Starship: This is the band that provided the theme song to "Snakes on a Plane." Do you really need anything more than that?

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